

Governor urges to curb video slots

AUSTIN (AP) — Casino-like video machines that look and play like slots are the targets of Texas Gov. George W. Bush's new effort following legislative defeat of his sanctions.

Bush will announce his plan to rid the state of video slot machines during a speech Thursday in Arlington to the Texas District and County Attorneys Association, spokeswoman Karen Hughes said.



BUSH

"One of the jobs of the governor is to anticipate problems," Hughes told the Austin American-Statesman Monday. "He is very concerned about the pro-

liferation of these casino-style gambling machines."

A task force appointed by Bush would write a bill to present to the 1999 Legislature to resolve questions prosecutors contend make it difficult to crack down on the video slots.

The governor also will announce a grant program to help prosecutors use the current law to go after gambling devices.

This year, a Bush-backed legislative effort died in an end-of-session filibuster masterminded by Sen. Jerry Patterson, R-Pasadena.

Known as eight-liners, the machines are estimated to generate more than \$100 million annually in Texas, with more than 20,000 in use at truck stops, convenience stores, veterans' halls and other sites, industry observers say.

They say the machines are gaining in popularity — almost an attraction of their own at businesses promoting themselves as Texas' closest thing to casinos.

Patterson, seeking the GOP nomination for land commissioner, acknowledged he collected "several thousands of dollars" in campaign contributions at a San Antonio convention of the Amusement and Music Operators of Texas, a trade association representing owners and operators of eight-liners.

Casinos in Dallas and Monte Carlo near Marble Falls are among businesses making the machines their primary source of income.

Rep. Terry Keel, R-Austin and co-sponsor of the Bush-backed bill, said eight-liner operators were emboldened by the measure's defeat.

State unveils plan to end welfare fraud

AUSTIN (AP) — The state on Tuesday unveiled its latest gadget to prevent welfare fraud, touting an electronic fingerprinting system scheduled to be installed statewide early next year.

"Taxpayers spend \$2.4 billion annually on the food stamps and AFDC programs in Texas," Department of Human Services Commissioner Eric Bost said. "Most of the two million recipients of this aid are honest, but the public has a right to expect that every step is taken to ensure our dollars only go to deserving families."

The \$12.7 million fingerprinting program was tested in Bexar and Guadalupe counties last year and had good results, agency officials said.

The amount of money involved in welfare fraud is hard to assess, agency spokesman Mike Jones said, adding the agency already has prevented some fraud.

For example, a San Antonio man applying for duplicate food stamp benefits using different names was caught with the help of the fingerprinting system, Jones said. The case is under investigation.

"This will really help out catching fraud from the front end," Jones said. "With this system, they will either be caught or deterred from applying in the first place."

By leaving fingerprints, applicants will not be able to apply for state assistance in different cities using fake identification or false information, Jones said.

Police say use of 'roofies' on the rise

EL PASO (AP) — A pill notorious for its connection with rapes seems to be gaining popularity among drug users looking for a more intense high, sometimes with disastrous consequences, police said Tuesday.

Rohypnol, an illegal tranquilizer also known as "roofies" and "roaches," again has become a topic for discussion here following what may have been the state's third death linked to a so-called date-rape drug. Rohypnol sometimes is used to incapacitate women so they can be sexually assaulted.

Police say they have seen increasing evidence Rohypnol use is on the rise, noting the seizure of about 1,700 pills so far this year in El Paso, up from just 53 in 1996. Federal authorities have seized even more.

"I think that indicates that there is a larger demand for them," Lt. Robert

Almonte, an El Paso narcotics officer, said. "It was known as the date-rape drug, and it can be used for that because of the tremendous strength that it has, but obviously people are using it just for personal use."

Almonte said many reports of Rohypnol use involve middle-school, high-school and college students.

Users apparently like to take Rohypnol to enhance the effects of other drugs, such as marijuana and heroin, and also combine it with alcohol, Almonte said.

"It's just another drug that people want to try and experience," he said. Police are still trying to determine what killed 16-year-old Casey LeeAnn Kirkland, who died of an overdose at Providence Memorial Hospital on Sunday, but they suspect Rohypnol may have been involved.

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- Student Activities Office (125 John J. Koldus Building)
- Sterling C. Evans Library
- Office of Graduate Studies (125 Teague)
- Office of the Dean of each College
- Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (10th Floor Rudder)

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